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Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Lucia Nunez and I'm a PCA, or Personal Care Attendant, from East Hartford. I emigrated to Connecticut from the Dominican Republic nearly 40 years ago in search of the American dream, like many other PCAs. It's my passion to help the most vulnerable people live independently and maintain their dignity at home. Every human being deserves to live with dignity, and I'm thankful to do work that allows me to live my passion on a daily basis.

Despite all we give, PCAs can't live with dignity. We are paid through the State of Connecticut because our clients qualify for Medicaid, but we make so little that I work 3 jobs, nearly 70 hours each week. I've been working at this pace for the past 25 years – I actually used to work 90 hours a week so I've scaled back a little! Even though I work the equivalent of 2 full-time jobs, the State of CT provides no health insurance, no sick time, and no retirement security for PCAs like me.

In August, my car was totaled in an accident that was the fault of the other driver. I was disoriented and had to go to the Emergency room, but without health insurance I could only hope that my car insurance paid the bill. And because we have no sick time, even though my back hurt and I was sore and shaken up, I could only afford to take the weekend off and went right back to work on Monday. All I could do was take ibuprofen, use compresses, and grit my teeth through the pain. I can't afford to miss more than a few hours' pay without compromising my ability to pay my bills. What kind of society do we live in where my car is better insured than my body?

I'm 61 years old, and I have no plan to retire. You can't retire if you have no money anyway. And without any retirement security, I'd rather keep moving, keep working, stay active. But one day, my body will slow down and I'll need a plan to retire. Is working 70 hours a week with no plan to retire really the American dream?

We live in the richest state in the country, with a \$3.1 billion rainy day fund, and yet the 10,000 of us who work as PCAs paid by state funds still live in poverty without health insurance, sick time, or retirement. We are 80% female, many of us are immigrants, and the majority of us are People of Color. Today I am asking you to help PCA's live with dignity. Thank you for your time.